Letter of Nestorius to Scholasticius, a eunuch of the emperor Theodosius.

I admire your God-loving soul, and most certainly as long as it is firm and does not wander into error, so as to approve the calumnies of the impure, who allege that we have rejected the expression Theotokos. It is a term, as you know, that we have often used, for we have said [that the names Theotokos and Anthropotokos should both be used], lest anyone should suppose that Jesus Christ is either a mere man or God without manhood. For if these offspring of demons were to have made full and true satisfaction, they would certainly have said that what we said at Constantinople, as your worthiness well knows, [has also been said by us here], but now it is emphatically the case that there has been no discussion between us. For how could this have taken place, when we have not even seen one another? If they call words exchanged between myself and other bishops, uttered privately in speculative inquiry, ‘a dialogue between us and Cyril’, they are lying. Know that what I have often said to them, to mutual satisfaction, and it is the belief of both them and us that the holy Virgin should be called both Theotokos and Anthropotokos — Theotokos, not as if God the Word received the beginning of his existence from her (for how could this be, when he is the creator of the Virgin?), but lest anyone should suppose that the one who was born was a mere man; and Anthropotokos, lest like the Manichees we should reject the incarnation and our first fruits. This was said by myself to the bishops, as in a preliminary practice and often mutually to each other, and both parties repeatedly said that they were satisfied, to the extent that they even applauded this as they left; but Cyril has totally shunned, and still shuns, discussion with us both previously and even now, thinking by these means to escape condemnation of the chapters he wrote, whose heretical character cannot be denied.

How then can your worthiness have accepted an accusation against us of this kind, although you must certainly remember that we uttered both expressions even in Constantinople, in relation to the mystery of the dispensation and the ineffable union? Do not, then, I beg you, give ready credence to the charges brought against us. For we believe that the use of the term Theotokos, if it is accompanied by Anthropotokos, is a sure sign of

piety. When we say [Christotokos, just as when we say] ‘Christ’, ‘Jesus’, ‘Son’, ‘only-begotten’, and ‘Lord’, the expression signifies both. But to those who do not approve of this term, we have offered the formula ‘Theotokos and Anthropotokos’, as indicative of the two natures, Godhead and manhood, in order that it may escape no one that we do not fall into the errors of either Mani or Paul [of Samosata], but are protected against both. For he who says that what is consubstantial with us was born from the Virgin, while being full of inseparable Godhead, proclaims in its integrity the whole mystery of our Lord’s incarnation; but the rejection of either of them abolishes the whole dispensation, and for those who deny it [their disgrace] has recoiled on their own heads, and will soon do so all the more.

But what is altogether worse and causes most harm, and what provokes great anger from Christ the Lord and deserves thunder and lightning a thousandfold, is to call the Godhead of the Only-begotten mortal and to say that God the Word died, needed to rest in the tomb, and received resurrection together with the flesh, assertions that are alien to the orthodoxy of the church and which we shall never accept. Perish the thought that we should suppose that the Godhead which gave life to our first fruits was ever deprived of life or needed another greater than itself to give it life! Anyone who said of the one whose very flesh did not see corruption that his Godhead suffered corruption together with the flesh would have to have been possessed by a demon. For the Godhead is incorruptible and incapable of any change, according to the statement made by God through the prophet: ‘I am [who] I am, and I shall not be changed.’

Your soul dear to God can take everything that the fathers have written and learn from them that our teaching is orthodox, and that those vile people are hoping to overcome the word of truth through deception. For by slipping in names that are shared by orthodox fathers they try to deceive the more simple-minded. For example, there is a certain Basil of Ancyra, who was one of the heretics, and there is also a Basil of Caesarea in Cappadocia, who was one of those who underwent many perils in defence of the faith. There is also the heretic Melito, and another Melito who was orthodox. There is Vitalis, who was a bishop of the orthodox, and another Vitalis who

was consecrated by the impious Apollinarius. Many others have the same name, and - not [to proceed] through each one - taking [the works of heretics], they present similar names to the simple-minded and lead them into perdition by means of equivocation, because they are unaware that there is also a Basil of Ancyra. Indeed many are easily seduced in this way by the skill of those who employ equivocation in order to deceive. But I beg you yourself to avoid this, since you are a vessel of complete and untainted orthodoxy; be so good as to devote yourself to the labour of excising a heresy that depends on multiple fraud. For God is my witness that, if the doctrines that [are] now [being spread abroad], I know not how, by these most impure people were to prevail in the churches, the inevitable consequence would be that the churches would hold the beliefs transmitted by Arius, Eunomius, and Apollinarius.

The Lord of the universe will demand nothing more of me beyond mentioning the matter to those who have the power to prevent it. This I have done from the first and right up till now, and I have not rested from constantly exhorting you servants of God not to neglect the battered dignity of religion; for if the tenets of orthodoxy were to receive due confirmation through your zeal, I myself(God be my witness) would most readily renounce the honour of the episcopacy. And lest you suppose that this is a pretence on my part, if religion is confirmed and orthodoxy restored to the churches, do require of me that I then send you all a letter off are well and return voluntarily to my former life in a monastery; for in my eyes nothing is more godly or blessed than repose of this kind. It would be my wish that the reports they have sent attacking us and the most religious bishops of the East come up for discussion in the presence of the most pious and Christ loving emperor, in the presence either of myself as well or of some people sent there, so that you might be stirred by them to crush those who by their lies have caused all this uproar. For of all the things they have related not one is true.